“How Things Don’t Happen”

Harris County
Flood Control District

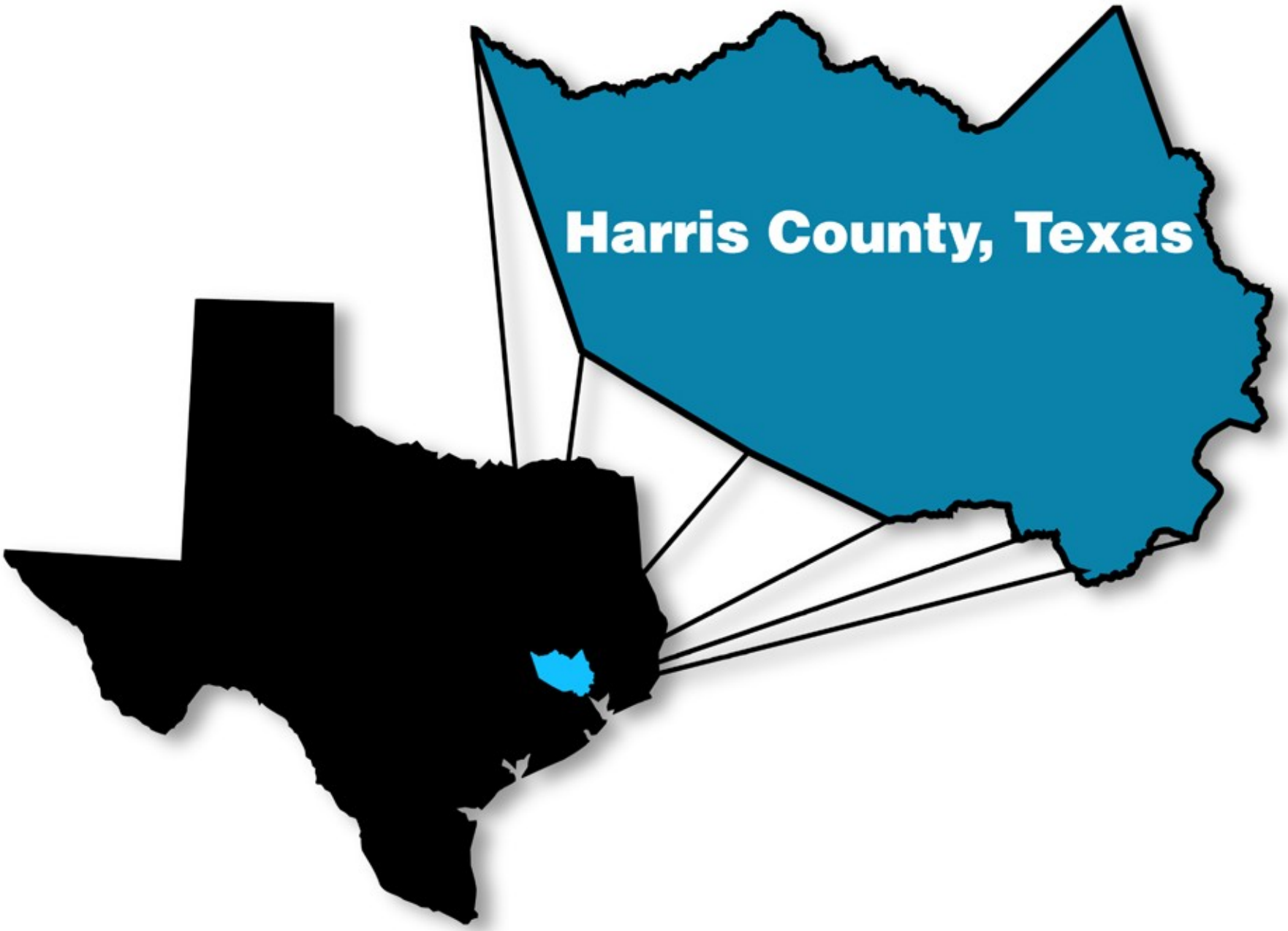
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

2004 Economic and Environmental Analysis Conference - Baltimore

April 15, 2004

Wayne Crull
Planning Project Manager

Steve Fitzgerald
Chief Engineer

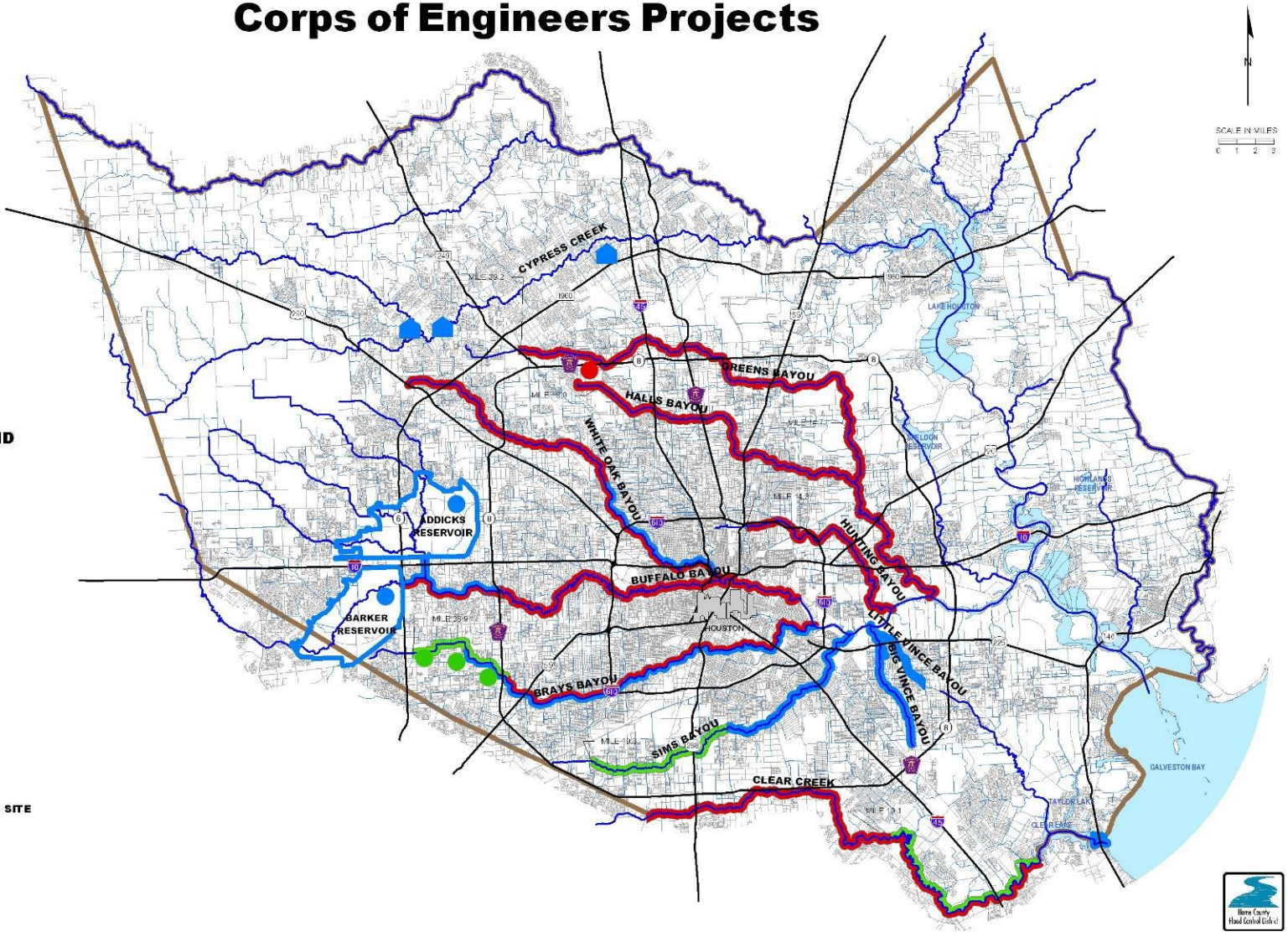

Harris County, Texas

The Partnership – Since 1937

US Army
Corps
of Engineers

Harris County
Flood Control District

Active and Completed Corps of Engineers Projects



LEGEND

- CHANNEL NETWORK

COMPLETED

- CHANNEL
- DETENTION
- BUYOUT

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- CHANNEL
- DETENTION

UNDER STUDY

- CHANNEL
- PROPOSED DETENTION SITE (GENERAL LOCATION)

Harris County Flood Control District

Active and Completed Corps of Engineers Projects.mxd

Plan Formulation Experience

Since 1995, the HCFCD has been involved in the plan formulation of

- Three Corps lead projects,
- Three Sponsor lead projects and
- Two other projects starting

Harris County Flood Control District

WRDA 1996 – Section 211

"Construction of Flood Control Projects by Non-Federal Interests"

- Allows local sponsor to take the lead in planning, design, and construction.
- Corps monitors and approves work
- Cost sharing the same
- Corps rules and process followed
- Local sponsor reimbursed the

Harris County Flood Control District

Plan Formulation

My definition - A focused process to identify a solution to a problem

My old idea - Begins when you are ready to make a list of measures to consider.

My NEW idea - Begins with writing the PMP

Ends when the recommended plan is accepted by the Corps and local sponsor.

Harris County Flood Control District

Things to Like

- Process is systematic
- Analytical requirements are technically sound.
- Reports document the process and justify the selected plan.

Harris County Flood Control District

Things to Not Like

- Studies can take a long time.
- Studies can cost a lot.
- Tedious – Team members and local sponsors can get frustrated.
- Reports frequently aren't clear and go through multiple revisions, reviews and rewrites.

Harris County Flood Control District

“How Things Don’t Happen”

- Everyone understands what is happening.
- Studies never get bogged down with to much detail
- Report writing is straightforward and successful.
- We know where we are and where we are going

Harris County Flood Control District

Local Sponsors

Need to learn . . .

. . . terminology and processes,

. . . understand that the process is

- **detailed**
- **complicated,**
- **time consuming and**
- **cloudy.**

Harris County Flood Control District

Suggestions

- Pull the sponsor into the planning process.
- Consider a regular conference series dedicated to Local Sponsor issues.
  - Half or more of the attendees should be local sponsor representatives.
  - Topics could include terminology, project life cycle, in-kind services, and the planning

Harris County Flood Control District

Details and Report Writing

Harris County
Flood Control District

The Thorns, Part 1 Details

- Level of Detail dictates the time a study takes AND the project's chance of being constructed.
- Expensive and / or redundant work can occur if information is not used properly in the study.
- Plan refinement and component optimization can become an infinite do loop leading to incomplete projects.

Harris County Flood Control District

Suggestions

- **Update and use plan management plan.**
- **Carefully consider and document the level of analytical detail on measures and alternatives**
- **Use the vertical team concept.**

Harris County Flood Control District

The Thorns, Part 2
Report Writing

- **The report IS the study. If the report doesn't communicate, the study is only a memory for a few team members.**

- **The report audiences have different needs at different times.**

- **Successful storytelling (report writing) is hard, especially with multiple authors.**

Harris County Flood Control District

Suggestions

- **Write and Review the report as you go**
- **Be clear, concise, and complete**
- **Remember your audience.**
- **Develop a seminar or conference focused on report writing and reviewing problems with previous reports**

Harris County Flood Control District

“How Things Don’t Happen”

- Everyone always understands what is happening.
- Studies never get bogged down with to much detail
- Report writing is always straight forward and successful.
- We always know where we are and where we are going

Harris County Flood Control District

Recap of Suggestions

- Update and use the PMP.
- Incrementally write the project report.
- Keep working to educate local sponsors on the Corps process.
- Remember the audience(s) when writing.
- Remember that your report IS the study for most people.

Harris County Flood Control District